



THE HISTORICAL PAGEANT OF THE MENNONITES AND OF
RETHEL COLLEGE

by

Thelma Dorothea Reinhard Morelli

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By Thelma Dorothea Reinhardt Morelli

Given in Lindley Hall, 1928

THE HISTORICAL PAGEANT OF THE MENNONITES AND OF
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NARRATOR: On such truths is the Mennonite faith based. The roots of Mennonitism run back to the time of the Reformation. The Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century, according to one contemporary history, comprised something like forty different sects. On the whole there were two main streams in early Anabaptists, dividing largely on the matter of non-resistance and the use of force. The majority belonged to the peaceful and non-resistant type, and soon after 1535 they became known as Mennonites. Among the leaders of this movement in Switzerland were men like Konrad Grebel, Felix Manx, George Blaurock, Michail Sattler, and Balthasar Hubmaier, all educated and able men. Their criticisms led to a public debate with Zwingli in January, 1525, as a consequence of which the authorities of Zurich ordered all children baptized. To these men this seemed as an order to act contrary to the word of God. They gathered in a private house near Zurich on February 7, 1525, and there baptized each other, thereby instituting Believer's Baptism. The Zurich government, in March 1526, ordered Anabaptists "Drowned in hideous parody of their belief, and a few months later Manz thus suffered martyrdom."

(Scene: On the words "To these men--" lights go up on second level, showing the scene following in pantomime to the place where the guards come in, read the proclamation, and drag the men away. Lights down.)

NARRATOR: Among the chief leaders of the Dutch Anabaptists was a former Dutch priest, who lived from 1492 to 1559, Menno Simons by name. He cast his lot with the peaceful wing of the Anabaptists and worked for twenty-five years amid many trials. He was not the founder of a new church but simply an organizer of a church already existing, although composed of many scattered and confused elements.

(DISCOVERED: Menno Simons, seated at one side writing; his wife on the other, knitting.)

MRS. SIMONS: What art thou writing now, Menno?

MENNO (Without looking up): A treatise upon the power of non-resistance.

MRS. SIMONS: Thy writings are liable to get thee into trouble as thy speaking doth.

MENNO (Looking up and smiling fondly): Thou art always fearful for me but never for thyself. Art thou not afraid to be married to a man who walks in danger?

MRS. SIMONS: Nay. But be as discreet as possible for thy sake. (Knock on door)

MENNO: We have company, good wife. Without interruptions no paper is ever written.

MRS. SIMONS--(Going to door and opening it.) Brother Smythe! And what brings thee so late and on such a cold night? Come to the fire. It is froze thou must be.

SMYTHE: (Goes to fire, rubs hands.) It is cold but it will soon warm up.

MENNO: Welcome, my dear brother. Cold as the night must be, thou art ever welcome here. (Goes to him. They kiss.) (Turns to wife.) Something warm, good wife, might not come in amiss.

MRS. SIMONS: (Bustling to fire.) I have some tea all steeping. I will set it on the table.

SMYTHE: Still writing, Menno? (Sits center rear.) I would think that the roaring of our enemies would frighten thee silent.

MENNO: Not so. No man can frighten me more. God has given me a strength within.

(Tea is served. They drink their tea and partake of some brown bread. Smythe drinks little and only nibbles of the bread.)

SMYTHE: I know. Thou art as brave as a lion, yet as harmless as a turtle dove. But one's life must be saved.

MENNO: (Laying down his bread.) Something is wrong with thee, my brother. You seem fearful. It is not required that a man save his life.

SMYTHE: I hesitate to speak what brought me here.

MENNO: Speak and fear not.

SMYTHE: It would be cold to lose one's head--think ye not?

MENNO: Certainly, but heaven would be sunny and warm. But why this talk of death?

SMYTHE: Because my life is in danger. (Turns to Mrs. Simons.) It seems to me that yon window is hardly covered by the curtain.

MRS. SIMONS: (Spreading hands.) Well, what of that, Brother Smythe? We have nothing to hide. Perhaps a traveler will pass in the night and need our light. The Master would have us let our light shine.

SMYTHE: (Meditatively) So he said, yet there are times--

MENNO: Man, speak not in parables. Something is bothering thee. Whatever it is, fear not to tell me? How is thy life in danger?

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SMYTHE: (Evasively) The Master spoke in parables.

MENNO: True, but what ails thee?

SMYTHE: Were I seen here, my life might be forfeit.

MENNO: Thou art dreaming. Persecuted we are; cast into prison at times; but so far there need be no fear of death.

SMYTHE: Thus we had thought, but--(stares at fire as if in a trance.)

MENNO: (Impressed) Hast had a vision?

SMYTHE: (rising in agitated manner). Reality rather. The Emperor gets tired of our peaceful ways.

MENNO: (In surprise): Charles the Emperor would surely pay no notice of us.

SMYTHE: Thy mistake. It is now crime punishable by death to aid thee in any way. Thou art a hunted man, Menno.

MENNO: (Rising slowly; Voice hollow.) Can these things be?

SMYTHE: Yea. I have seen the proclamation. It is over the hand and seal of Emperor Charles himself.

MRS. SIMONS: (Advancing agitatedly.) Oh, it cannot be.

MENNO: (raising his hand): Careful, good wife. I feared this would come. The powers of darkness are the powers of this world. What saith it?

SMYTHE: That thou art to be arrested. There is a price upon thy head.

MENNO: Of how much?

SMYTHE: The Emperor offers one hundred golden Karolus gulden for thee.

MENNO: He would pay so much for a preacher of peace? What else?

SMYTHE: If the betrayer be an Anabaptist he is to be pardoned.

(Mrs. Simons begins to cry softly.)

MENNO: The Emperor flatters me. Did he also threaten those who might give me aid?

SMYTHE: With death, as I said.

MENNO: Wife, leave off thy tears. (To Smythe) Thou shouldst not have come to warn me.

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SMYTHE: And have thy blood upon my head? Not so!

MENNO: I fear not the Emperor's death anger.

SMYTHE: But if thou art caught and die, the work must suffer. The Emperor fears thee with the gospel of peace.

MENNO: Perhaps thou art right. But what to do?

SMYTHE: Flee. East Friesland would be a good place. Countess Ann will welcome thee.

MENNO: Should such men as I flee? It is ignoble. I learned not my Master so.

SMYTHE: Better to flee and still labour for Him than to stay and die for Him. Only the powers of darkness would rejoice in thy death.

MENNO: I shall be hounded.

SMYTHE: True, but thou canst write and preach. Thy letters can feed the flock here. Write much and use thy printing press.

MENNO: (Meditates awhile stroking beard, looking down. Looks up suddenly.) Thou art right. Good wife, begin to pack up our few belongings. Brother Smythe, if thou wilt obtain a sleigh for us, we will be ready to go before the sunlights the Emperor's minions.

SMYTHE: In spite of the cold, I go. May God bless this move. (Exit)

100' and 120' deep in the water. The boat

was 20' long and 10' wide. It was

made of wood and was very strong. It was

built by the people of the island.

It was very strong and was built by the people of the island.

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NARRATOR: The Mennonite refusal to bear arms and to take the oath has been a constant reason for misunderstanding and persecution expressing itself in various forms of religious and economic oppression. This has caused various groups to migrate again and again, looking for a country where they would be tolerated and allowed to live their life in quiet and peace. The first German settlers in America were Mennonites. They came from Crefeld, Germany, and made Pennsylvania their destination because of an invitation extended to them by William Penn.

Scene: First level: A group of Quakers and Mennonites are gathered to discuss their difficulties.

ALL: Ad lib

FIRST MAN: How can we endure this plague of high taxes?

SECOND MAN: Taxes, yes. But there are worse things. My son is a prisoner as are many of our sons.

THIRD MAN: Not only our sons. How many of us have been imprisoned or forced to suffer other indignities? We are as persecuted as the Jews, now our only friends.

FIRST MAN: You are right. Even our church had to be built on a back street where it would not attract attention.

THIRD MAN: If only we could leave Crefeld. If--

SECOND MAN: Perhaps we could take our silk industry across the sea to the new land. Let us listen closely to Mr. Penn when he comes. He has helped others, perhaps he will be able to free us from persecution.

FIRST MAN: Here comes Jacob Telner and William Penn now.

(These two enter and are greeted by the group)

Telner and Penn go to second level.

TELNER: This is our good friend Mr. Penn. You must believe me when I say he is our good friend. You know me as a merchant you can trust. So can you also trust me in this matter. Mr. Penn wishes to speak to you about his land in the new world.

PENN: My good people. Some of you are Quakers, some of you are Mennonites. All of you have felt cruel persecution. I have come to invite you to my beautiful wooded land in the new world. The people already there are God-fearing; the Indians are peace loving. I have granted to Jacob Telner, Jan Striepers and Dirck Sipman, all Mennonites, each 5000 acres of land; the stipulation being 100 pounds sterling for each 500 acres and a settlement of a certain number of families within a specified period of time.

SECOND MAN: When and how do you advise us to leave Crefeld?

PENN: The Concord, a good ship with a capacity of 180 passengers will sail in early June of our next year 1683. Could you be ready by that time?

ALL: Ad lib

NARRATOR: Soon after the arrival of the Concord group at Philadelphia the settlers began to prepare their first homes in the new world. In honor of the nationality of the colonists the village was afterwards called Germantown. Later settlements were made in Lancaster County and from these places spread to other counties of the state and finally also to other states among which were Virginia, Maryland, and in the nineteenth century, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas and the West. Between 1820 and 1860 there came to America groups of Amish, Swiss, Bavarian, Palatinate, and Hessian Mennonites. It was during the eighteen forties and fifties that several groups of Mennonites from Bavaria and the Palatinate arrived. Most of them located in Lee county, Iowa, and at Summerfield, Saint Clair county, Illinois. These communities later took an active part in the development of missionary interest and the creation of the General Conference of Mennonites of North America. Between 1873-1880 groups of Mennonites left Holland and Prussia seeking freedom. Near the end of the eighteenth century Queen Catherine of Russia invited the Mennonites of Germany and Prussia to settle in her domain.

Scene: Queen Catherine seated on her throne.
(Messenger enters)

MESSANGER: Your Highness, the Mennonite delegates have arrived.

QUEEN: Good. Bring them in at once. ✓

MESSANGER: (Re-entering) Her ✓ Hoeppner, Herr Bartch, and Herr van Trappe.

(Each enters as his name is called)

QUEEN: Enter, gentlemen. I understand that since my promises to your people, including free transportation, religious toleration, with the right of establishing and controlling your own schools and churches, and your own forms of local government; loans with which to establish factories and other industries; and military exemptions, you have been spying out land. I desire to know the results of your investigation.

HOEPPNER: Yes, your majesty. My persecuted people were so interested in your generous offer that they sent us to your great country to find suitable homesteads.

VAN TRAPPE: On your advice, I, as your special representative, went with these men to your Crown lands in South Russia.

QUEEN: Do you think your people could settle that land for Russia and at the same time build happy homes for themselves?

BARTCH: Oh yes, Queen Catherine. Various locations were offered us along the lower Dnieper. We-----

HOEPPNER: Prince Potemkin, the governor of new Russia interviewed us. Pri-----

BARTCH: As did the Empress and Crown Prince at St. Petersburg. The Empress has promised liberal terms to all Mennonites who desire to immigrate.

HOEPPNER: Queen Catherine, with your permission, Her ✓ van Trappe will read the list of promises.

QUEEN: Read, Herr van Trappe.

VAN TRAPPE: I hereby promise all Mennonites who settle in this territory religious toleration; military exemption; sixty dessiatine (about 175 acres) of land for each family; free use of the Crown forests; tax exemption for ten years; no Crown dues after that, but an annual fee of fifteen kopeks (seven and a half cents) per dessiatine; a monopoly of the distilleries and breweries within the settlement----

QUEEN: Otherwise granted to the nobility only

THE HISTORY OF THE
REIGN OF KING CHARLES THE FIRST

IN WHICH ARE CONTAINED THE SEVERAL ACTS OF PARLIAMENTS
AND THE SEVERAL DECREES OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

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HOEPPNER: Yes, your majesty.

VAN TRAPPE: (continuing) free transportation from Prussia to their new homes; a loan of five hundred rubles(\$250) to each family; and the support for each family until the first harvest at the rate of ten kopeks per person. They are to have complete control over their own churches and schools with a liberal degree of local autonomy in self-government with the settlement. Religious propaganda among the native Russians is, however, forbidden." These are the promises, Queen Catherine.

QUEEN: And you are satisfied with the provisions? (Looks at the three men)

ALL THE MEN: We are.

QUEEN: Then so be it. Russia shall keep these promises for ever and ever.

(Black out on second playing level while the lights come up on the higher level. There we see the immigrants taking leave of their country, some mournfully, some happily, but all looking back toward their fatherland until they reach the peak of the level. Then they stop and look forward towards their new home. They drop down on their knees and repeat the 121 Psalm by cumulative degrees. Lights dim as they continue crossing.)

NARRATOR: By the fall of 1788, over two-hundred families had started on the long journey to their new home by way of the Baltic to Riga, thence overland to the Knieper, about fifty miles below the present town of Ekaterinoslav.

During the next hundred years they suffered, labored, and prospered. Queen Catherine died, Alexander II ascended to the throne and with his power he destroyed the promises of the good queen. In 1870 Alexander demanded that the Mennonite wheat growers learn the Russian language and become soldiers in the Czar's army. The year following this decree, emissaries were sent to America to see if freedom could be found there. These men returned with favorable reports. The Santa Fe Railroad company had just completed a railway across the state of Kansas. C. B. Schmidt, immigration agent for the railroad was sent to visit the Mennonites in their native villages and urge them to come to Kansas.

Scene: 2nd level--As lights come up er discover a stable dimly lighted, surrounded by men. At back center is Schmidt facing front.

SCHMIDT: Believe me, gentlemen, this new land holds untold possibilities for you. And listen while I tell you again, The Santa Fee railroad will charter a ship and take free a boatload of provisions to America, yet.

1900

The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the train was the cold. It was a sharp contrast to the warm, humid air of the South. I had heard that the weather in the North was harsh, but I didn't realize just how cold it would be. The wind was biting, and the snow was falling in soft, white flakes. I pulled my coat tighter around me and walked quickly towards the station. The people around me were all bundled up in heavy coats and hats, their faces pale from the cold. I felt a little out of place, but I tried to keep my head down and focus on my destination.

As I walked, I noticed the architecture of the city. The buildings were tall and made of dark stone, with many windows. Some of the windows had shutters, and some had flower boxes underneath them. The streets were wide and paved with cobblestones. I had never seen a city like this before, and I was fascinated by everything I saw.

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1st MAN: But we will have to buy new household goods and farm implements when we should reach America.

SCHMIDT: Nein, nein, my good friends, my railroad will take a boatload of your goods across the Atlantic free of cost to you.

2nd MAN: Das ist sehr gut. But you say this land, Kansas, is a long ways from the Atlantic coast. How---

SCHMIDT: I know what you are going to ask--also the Santa Fe will ship your goods to Kansas. That is a good offer,---not?

ALL: (Ad lib among themselves, showing plainly that they are interested.)

3rd MAN: Herr Schmidt, how does the land in this country you call Kansas compare with our Russia?

SCHMIDT: It is very much like the land here on which you have been raising your wheat for nearly a century. It is flat with few lakes and the growing season is similar to the one you have been used to here in Russia. Brother Suderman was just returned from there. He will agree with me.

2 SUDEMAN: Ja. Everything Herr Schmidt tells us is true. But will you explain to us again the terms on which we can buy this Kansas land?

SCHMIDT: Of course! (Emphatically) For ten miles on each side of the railroad we will sell the land a fifty per cent below---

(A boy rushes in)

BOY: The Russian soldaten are coming. They are after Herr Schmidt. (The men arise quickly, look toward door, then calmly at one another.)

1st MAN (Elder); Herr Schmidt must not be caught and put into prison by the Russians. With our friend imprisoned, how could the Santa Fe help any of us to reach America? Who will volunteer to take him to the next village?

2nd MAN: I will. My horses are still hitched to the sled. Herr Schmidt, I will take you to a place of safety. Come.

SCHMIDT: Danke.

(They exit. The others take places. The elder takes a hymnal from the table.)

1st MAN: Let us sine Hymn No. 234.

(He recites one verse, then lease singing. Suddenly a loud knock is heard at the door. He pauses slightly, then continues, Knock is heard again, impatiently.)

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ELDER: Did some one knock? Come in---

(Two Russian soldiers enter, clustering, stamping their feet because of the cold.)

1st SOLDIER: Which is the American dog, Schmidt? We traced him to Alexanderwohl.

ELDER: (In loud voice) Herr Schmidt, are you here? (Louder) Herr Schmidt, are you here? There are visitors to see you. (As no one answers he turns to the soldier, looks him straight in the face, and with slight gesture speaks) Not here. (He turns to resume his singing service) Would you like to join us in our evening song services?

2nd SOLDIER: (Pushing past the 1st Soldier) No? We want Schmidt. You tell us where he is or----- (His anger gets the better of him and he grabs the elder by the shoulders and shakes him until the book falls to the floor. The elder submits passively to the ill-treatment. The soldier frees him. The elder stoops to pick up the book) Where did he go?

(As the elder stoops to recover the book, the furious Russian hits him sharply across the shoulders with his whip. The elder jerks himself up to an upright position. His face winces with pain, but he turns to the group of men and says:)

ELDER: Ready for the next verse.

(He begins to sing and the other men join him. The Russian soldiers, defeated, stomp to the door and exit. The men continue singing as the light dims.)

NARRATOR: And again thousands of Mennonites prepared to leave the country which had been their home for so long. Some were planning to settle in Nebraska, some in Kansas, but all were looking for the same thing--freedom from persecution. All they desired was some haven where they could practice the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, and make an honest living for themselves and their children.

Various things were taken along, but one thing all tried to procure. That was the famous Turkey Red wheat of Russia. Even the children sorted the grain, always searching for the largest kernels.

In Caslov, a village of South Russia, lived a little eight-year-old girl, Anna Barkman. Her father sent her into the wheat bin to select the finest and roundest kernels to be used for seed in the land to which they were going. Handful after handful she sorted, always choosing the proper grains from the malformed. Patiently she watched the amber grains trickle through her fingers and dreamed of the land across the sea where her father would sow this wheat. At last little Anna had filled two gallons of plump, golden kernels.

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As a reward Father Barkman asked his little helper to cup her hands while he gave her a handful of hazel nuts-- the only gift he could afford, besides his love.

Scene; While the narrators have been reading this, the lights have gone up on the second level stage on the words, "Even little children," This scene is acted out in pantomime until lights fade as father, kneeling, looks out into the future with arms around little Anna. During this scene, the immigrants are again seen on upper level, crossing carrying bundles, articles of various kinds, etc. Lights fade. (In Washington President Harrison called a special session of Congress who decided to give the Mennonites exemption from military services)

***NARRATOR: From Russia to the Atlantic: across the Atlantic to the United States; across the United States to Nebraska and Kansas, the Santa Fe railroad brought the Mennonites

In Topeka they were welcomed by the governor. A part of this group came to the vicinity of Newton and until they had bought their land and had settled, they lived together in immigrant houses. *to Mennonite*

Scene: On lower level. Evening. The men and women are reverently seated on the bare ground. At one side, facing them, is the Vorsaeuger (song director) As he begins to repeat the words of the old German Hymn, the people kneel so that they are in this position while they sing one verse.

ELDER: Our Father in Heaven, we thank thee for the safe guidance thou hast given us, and for the protection thou hast granted on our journey to this land. Without thy help and love we would never have succeeded in coming to a land where we can live in peace and freedom. We ask thy help in the days to come as we go out into building our new homes. Bless those who aided us in crossing the water and we pray that thou be near to our Brethern who are still in Russia. Amen.

(All sing another verse as the lights fade completely out)

NARRATOR: The search for homesteads began. Each family chose their own site. How desolate many a woman's heart must have been when her husband said, "This is where we will build our home." How could any one live in this barren land? A land without roads, without trees, without homes, without friendly neighbors? But beside her stood her husband, strong and courageous. There was beauty overhead in the clouds which looked like fragments of frozen smoke. Trees would grow with the help of the good water which was said to be had for the digging. Neighbors would come, and God willing, they would build a happy home for themselves and their children's children.

SCENE: While this is being read, the scene will be pantomined by a couple on the second level.

NARRATOR: With strong hearts and high courage the Mennonites plowed and harrowed their fields, sowed their Turkey-Red wheat, watched it grow with the rain and the sun, then cut and stacked the full-grown grain until it could be threshed with oxen team and threshing stone.

SCENE: While this is being read by narrator, a moving frieze is passing on the first level, pantomiming the plowing, harrowing, sowing, cutting, and stacking. On the word, "threshing stone," the lights will include the second level where two imitation threshing stones will be placed on either side.

NARRATOR: And after the harvest of the fine winter wheat which was destined to make Kansas famous, the workers gave thanks to God and celebrated their good fortune.

SCENE: Just at the close of the above, gay voices are heard off stage. A large group of men, women, and children come gaily trooping in on the third level, carrying baskets, etc. filled with food. One of the men interrupts the scene with:

MAN: Before we begin our merrymaking, let us bow our heads in prayer. We thank thee, our heavenly Father, for thy divine leadership. Our faith in thee has lead us from cruel persecution to these broad friendly fields where we have found freedom and prosperity. But, Father, help thy children always to be humble before thee, seekers of the simple life, loving peace and their fellow man. Amen.

(Gradually the solemnity of the occasion breaks, laughter breaks out once again as the entire group bursts into a rollicking German tune. Exit.)

SCENE: Lights come up on second level where we see a group of picnicians--a family group comprised of the grandmother, father, mother, daughter, and son. The family has been enjoying their harvest festival picnic, but the son seems to be dreaming of something else.

DAUGHTER: Oh, I love this place. Where else in all the world is it as beautiful as in Kansas?

GRANDMOTHER: Have you forgotten so soon the beauties of Russia? There the wheat was richer, the gardens ranker, the skies bluer---

FATHER: ---And we more miserable. No, grandmother, we should be satisfied in this land of plenty.

MOTHER: And so I think we are, although we can not blame grandmother for remembering. But, my son, why are you so quiet? Do you not know that this is a happy day?

SON: Yes, mother, it is a happy day; but it could be happier.

FATHER: Now, what are you dreaming about?

SON: I'm dreaming about those Mennonites who came to the state of Pennsylvania so many years before we came to America. I wish we had gone to Pennsylvania.

DAUGHTER: And not have come to this beautiful state? Oh, brother, could Pennsylvania be as beautiful as this?

SON: And what is the good of a beautiful landscape if you ache here? (He puts his hand over heart)

FATHER: I fear I understand you not, my son. What could you find in Pennsylvania that you find not here?

SON: Have you ever heard our people speak of one, Christopher Dock?

MOTHER: It seems I have heard the name spoken. But what of him?

SON: He was a wonderful man. He began a school, --the very first school.

FATHER: And what of that?

SON: You will laugh. But I care not if you laugh. I---I want to go to a higher school.

ALL: To more school! Ad lib

GRANDMOTHER: I laugh not, but I weep. Oh, my boy, why? ----

SON: Why? Because Christ was a great teacher, and I want to be like Christ. I want to be a missionary to the Indians. Missionaries must teach but how can I teach unless I have been taught? And where can I go to be taught? We have no schools.

FATHER: Leader! And what became of the great Mennonite leaders? Killed by educated people. Don't forget that the very soldiers who persecuted us were educated people. No, my son, education is a very dangerous thing.

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SON: But, father, remember that the founders of our religion were educated men. Surely education was not a dangerous tool in the hands of such men as Grebel, Manx, Blaurock, and others. Christopher Dock was a godly man.

MOTHER: Perhaps our son is right----

GRANDMOTHER: No, no. If you want to keep your son, do not let him go away to school. He will learn evil things there. You will lose him. He will forget that he is one of us and will love apart. What will he care about us when he becomes educated?

SON: Oh, little grandmother, never would I ^{As} forget that I belonged here with all of you. But there must be schools. Someday there will even be a college. Someday----

DAUGHTER: Someday perhaps I, too, can go to college.

(All but the brother look at her with consternation and even he with surprise)

Narrator: —

(Scene: Four men grouped around a table)

CHAIRMAN: We will now have a report from the Committee on Education.

FIRST MAN: Mr. Chairman, I shall read the following resolution which we offer for your approval. "Whereas the Mennonites have no schools therefore have no means of educating young people for the Missions and whereas young Mennonite leaders are needed, we do resolve that a Theological School be established as soon as it can be done by the Brotherhood.

CHAIRMAN: This resolution is now before you. Is there any discussion?

SECOND MAN: Mr. Chairman, I agree that a school is necessary but it seems to me that we are above all, sorely in need of a Christian Mennonite school as the foundation for the union of our Mennonite divisions, as well as for the spreading of the Kingdom of God, or Missions.

THIRD MAN: If that were in the form of a motion I'd second it immediately, and may I suggest that we include in the resolution that the traveling preacher of the General Conference be instructed to gather subscriptions toward the establishment of a Mennonite school. I don't suggest it--I make the whole thing into a motion.

(others second it)

CHAIRMAN: It has been moved and seconded that we resolve to organize a Christian Mennonite school with the traveling--(His voice trails off as the lights dim.)

NARRATOR: In October, 1866, the newly erected building at Wadsworth, Ohio, could be dedicated. Unfortunately, after nearly eleven years the school was forced to close because of financial difficulties. Meanwhile, new life germinated out of the ruins. For scarcely had the Wadsworth school closed when out on the prairies of Kansas new life in the school cause began to unfold. In fact, the Kansas conference owes its beginning in 1877 to the agitation of the school cause. The result of the efforts of the Kansas Conference in school matters was the founding of the "Fortbildungs-schule" (which may mean a continuation or preparatory school) in 1882. The Fortbildung schule was opened in a school house furnished by the Alexanderwohl church for that purpose. In the fall of 1883, it was moved to Halstead, Kansas, where the "Halstead College Association" had very kindly prepared school buildings which it placed at the disposal of the Kansas Conference gratuitously for a period of five years. It soon became evident that the school needed better quarters and a more substantial financial support than that which it enjoyed at Halstead if it was to grow as it should. Newton, which in the meantime had become interested in securing the school, had made a more liberal offer than Halstead could afford to make; therefore, the Kansas Conference decided to accept the Newton offer. Because a group of men had faith in Mennonite education, they were willing to give of their time and energy until they had received enough money in donations to begin the foundation of Bethel College. In the year 1888, on October 12, the cornerstone was laid.

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

The history of the United States is a story of growth and development. It begins with the first settlers who came to the continent, and it ends with the present day. The story is one of struggle and triumph, of hope and despair. It is a story that has shaped the world as we know it.

The first settlers came to the continent in search of a better life. They were driven by the promise of land and freedom. They found a land of opportunity, but they also found a land of hardship. They had to fight for their survival, and they had to build a new society from scratch.

Over the years, the United States has grown from a small colony to a great nation. It has become a land of opportunity for people from all over the world. It has become a land of freedom and democracy. It has become a land that has shaped the world as we know it.

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(Scene: On the upper level will sit the dignitaries. On the second level we see a portion of the foundation waiting for the cornerstone. By it are standing eight men. On the lower level are the spectators.)

MR. GOERZ: We have all assembled to lay the cornerstone of a new college. Christ is the true cornerstone, and in His name we will begin the work of this building, and in His name we will continue. We wish you all a hearty welcome. Rev. S. F. Sprunger from Berne, Indiana is to be our next speaker. Rev. Sprunger.

REV. SPRUNGER: Christ said it was the wise man who founded his house upon a rock, and we have come to do like the wise man, to lay the foundation stone of our building that it might stand the ravages of time. Christ commanded man to go out into the world and preach God's word, and it is in that spirit that this college is conceived.

GOERZ: And now we are going to permit those of you who have not had an opportunity to become a part of Bethel College to contribute to her growth. We are passing out cards on which you may write how much you will be able and willing to give toward the building fund. (As cards are passed, the following:)

FIRST MAN: How much are you going to give?

SECOND MAN: Do I look like a foolish one? In a few months the wolves will be howling around here. Cover that foundation over with brush and it would make a fine cow barn. One thing is certain--it will never be a school.

MR. GOERZ: (Taking in the cards) Thank you, everyone, and may God bless you for your faith in Bethel College. Now I want to present the Rev. Davis of the Presbyterian church of Newton.

REV. DAVIS: I welcome you to Newton. Newton is a fine town. Just walk down our main street. Not a saloon will you see. And Newton is located in a fine state. Kansas has boundless resources which be to your advantage. We're proud of our state, and we are proud of our town. We are proud of our schools and colleges, and I welcome you because you come to lay the cornerstone of another college in the interest of Christian education. I welcome you because you come to found a college in the name of Christ, one which will equip the heart as well as the brain. Love your church as you do your country; build up and support Bethel College. Other denominations have received rare benefits from their colleges. So can you. Again I extend to you a hearty welcome.

REV. SHELLY: (In German) We dedicate this building in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. (Doxology as the lights dim.)

1860. The year of the great earthquake. On the 25th of January, at 10 o'clock, the great earthquake struck the city of San Francisco. It was a terrible shock, and the city was in a state of confusion. The houses were all shaken, and many of them were destroyed. The streets were filled with people, and the air was filled with the sound of bells and the cry of "Earthquake!"

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NARRATOR: Because all people did not have the vision and faith of a few, the building went unfinished for five years. But at the end of that period the college was ready to open its doors to students. The founders expected Bethel College to grow. The endeavor will ever be to offer so complete and thorough a course as to enable the institution to take and maintain a position among the leading colleges of the country. The motto of the school became "Faith in God's help and guidance; Hope in the good will and favor of our brethern; Charity toward our rising generation, who plead for better educational facilities; and in the prosecution of the work fairly begun, our aim shall be ONWARD, EVER ONWARD. The keys of the building were delivered to the officials with appropriate ceremonies.

MR. GOERZ: We now meet in a grand building. Five years ago we were in doubt where and with what to build. We are glad that we have been allowed to build and arrange the school according to the dictates of our own consciences. There have been no dictations, as there would have been in the Czar-ruled Russia. The results of the school will be wholesome. It will bring our youth together, that we may become a unity. Rev. Christian Showalter from Iowa will speak next.

REV. SCHOWALTER: Not man has done this great work. God looked down upon us, saw what was wanting, and blessed us. A new era is beginning for us. The cornerstone of the college was laid in 1888. After five years, it is dedicated. What remembrances are called forth. It is Jacob's dream, the school of Bethel, as mentioned in the Bible. The difficulties were many, but they have been overcome one by one, and at last the college is a reality.

REV. GOERZ: Rev. Davis

REV. DAVIS: Five years ago I talked to you at the laying of the cornerstone of this building. It gives me great pleasure to talk to you again at the completion of this magnificent building. It is not expected of me that I make a long address on this occasion, but I do come here to give my personal endorsement to the institution. In behalf of the Ministerial Association I congratulate you upon the opening of this college. I am glad that it is a co-educational institution. That under the divine protection of a higher education our boys may be raised to manhood and our girls to womanhood. The good influence of this institution will not be confined to Newton, to Kansas, not to the States. I hope the time will come when it will become necessary to build another building like this magnificent one to the west of it and another to the east of it. And in whatever efforts you put forth to enlarge and make better the institution, we, the citizens of Newton, are with you.

NARRATOR: The high and noble aim of Bethel College has always been to give an opportunity to the sons and daughters of Mennonite families to obtain their education within the pale of their own church, as well as to pay the debt of gratitude to other denominations by opening wide the doors of this institution so that all might have the opportunity to partake of whatever advantage might be offered by it. For Bethel College

was not to be merely a local institution; it was to be opened not only to members of the Mennonite church, but to all who might wish to avail themselves of the opportunity thus offered.

And so Bethel College was ready to welcome students. There were sixty students enrolled the first day. Bethel seemed to be on its way forward; but those early leaders still felt the effect of opposition. Worry took its toll. The first president, C. H. Wedel, died suddenly one Sunday morning in 1910. David Goerz, who had been the first business manager had to bear the chief financial burden during the trying years when opposition was strong and money was scarce. There were others who did much to protect the college. These men literally burned out their lives in the cause of Bethel College. Dr. Langenwelter, the next president, worked to make Bethel a four-year college, but it was not until 1912 that the first A. B. degrees were granted. Through the years the college has gone through many a crisis. In spite of difficulties, Bethel College has progressed.

- 1882--Founding of the Mennonite School at Emmenthal
- 1883--Founding of the Holstead Academy
- 1888--Laying of the cornerstone for Bethel College
- 1893--Opening of school
- 1900--College credit given for the first time
- 1903--Bethel Deaconess Hospital Assoc. organized.
- 1907--Ladies dormitory built
- 1911--Full college course toward an A. B. degree given for first time
- 1914--Alumni Hall built
- 1916--Accrediment by the state board of education
- 1924--Erection of the Science Hall
- 1933--Beginning of the five year program
- 1938--Accredited by the North Central Association
- 1938--Laying of the Memorial Hall cornerstone

(Lights come up on the second level where a reproduction of the laying of the cornerstone for the Memorial Hall will be presented. Lights go down. The band, seated below, plays a rousing march which goes into the alma mater sung by all. Then--)

No single person has made Bethel College what it is today, but all of these (Lights up on full stage) and all of you have helped her grow and develop. More than 4000 students have attended Bethel College during the fifty years of its existence. It has grown from a one-room school with 21 pupils at Emmenthal to a school with 36 faculty members, 25 college owned buildings, and an enrollment of 469 students including the summer session. Of all the students who have attended Bethel College nearly 100 have become missionaries, 150 have become ministers, and more than 1,000 have become teachers. The college has always had a struggle financially. Without you she cannot live. Keep faith with those who struggled to make her possible. They gave their very lives for the sake of Christian education. What can you give? At the close of the pageant there will be monks at the doors ready to accept any small or large offerings which you may desire to give.

(Prayer by Rev. Kreider. Band will play the Doxology which will be sung by everyone.)

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